

~~TOP SECRET T-3~~

2 December 1965

NSA Declassification/Release Instructions on File.

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Comments on DCI Draft letter to the President on the situation in Vietnam.

1. The draft letter really does not tell the President anything new. I would suggest concentration on point three only; that is, the presence of Chicom forces in North Vietnam. In addition, several sentences should be added which discuss the significance and implication of the Chicom presence.

2. OCI has published two Intelligence memos on the Chicom presence in North Vietnam; one in October and one on 26 November 1965. The latest was used to prepare page three of the memo to the President. Page three should be rewritten to present more comprehensive summary of the facts and then a series of statements on the implications and significance should be added to conclude the memo.

3. I would suggest the following points as having primary importance for policy.

(1) US policy currently is based on the assumption that Hanoi is relatively independent of Chicom and that they do not want the presence of Chinese troops in DRV. The fact that Chicom troops are in DRV in relatively large numbers and that they entered in June 1965 seems to call for a reevaluation of US premises. The political relationships and agreements between Hanoi and Peking undoubtedly changed sometime before June and we are currently faced with a US cultural lag.

(2) Neither Hanoi or Peking has suggested that Chinese "volunteers" have been sent to DRV. In fact, they try to give the impression that the Chinese have not entered the scene. At the same time the US has stated officially that Chinese troops are not in DRV. It would be appropriate to examine the desirability and implications of the release of this information on Chicom involvement and access what effect this would have on US domestic policy, on the Vietnam situation, as well as the rest of the world. Sooner or later the Chinese presence will become known to the American public.

(3) The significance of the estimated actual number of Chicom troops (22-29000) has also been omitted. This number of troops is adequate for a large construction effort, as well as AAA protection and security. While we have no evidence of the movement of Chicom combat forces into the DRV, current troop strength in the DRV could provide logistic support for some 6-10 divisions. If the units currently in China, in border positions are also included, rear service support would almost be equivalent to that originally stationed in the Kunming and Canton Military Regions. These two regions have 7 armies of 3 division each.

(4) Chinese troop presence in the DRV probably is directly related to the number of DRV troops relieved of duty in the north and recently sent to fight in South Vietnam. This would suggest that a further and continuous buildup of Chicom forces in the DRV will release additional DRV forces for deployment in the south. If the war lasts long enough, one can visualize the complete replacement of DRV personnel with Chicom personnel and the Chicom presence would automatically give them defacto control of the country without direct participation in the fight.

(5) Current estimates state that DRV personnel are manning SA-2 sites, new aircraft, new radar sites and a large number of new AAA emplacements. No matter how one calculates the total personnel requirement, the number looks big. Where did all these technically trained personnel come from in such a short time? Not with standing the many current DRV operational deficiencies, the relative performance of the DRV appears very significant and may change our previous estimates of the capability of unsophisticated military systems in Southeast Asia to assimilate new equipment when there is a strong incentive and determination to obtain an objective of this type. Additionally, it is likely that some Chicom units in the DRV are manning AAA emplacements.

(6) The large number of Chicom troops in the DRV makes it almost impossible for Hanoi's enthusiasm for continuing the war to fade. The implied Chicom influence would suggest the leadership in the DRV may not be free to decide to negotiate. If this is true, our present policy may be directed toward the wrong capital.

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